Numb. CCLXXXIX.

# The SPECTATOR.

*... summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam.* Hor.

*Thursday, January* 31, 1712.

UPON taking my Seat in a Coffee-house I often draw the Eyes of the whole Room upon me, when in the hottest Seasons of News, and at a time that perhaps the Room is just come in, they hear me ask the Woman for his last Week's Bill of Mortality: I have been sometimes taken on this occasion for a Parish Sexton, sometimes for an Undertaker, sometimes for a Doctor of Physick. In short, I am guided by the Spirit of a Philosopher, I take occasion from hence to reflect upon the regular Encrease and Diminution of Mankind, consider the several various ways through which we pass from Life to Eternity. I am very much pleased with these Weekly Admonitions, that they give my Mind such Thoughts as ought to be the entertainment of every reasonable Creature, and consider with Pleasure to my self, by what Deliverances, or, as we commonly call them, Distempers, I may possibly make my Exit out of this World of Sorrows, into that Condition of Existence, wherein I hope to be happier than it is possible for me at present to conceive.

This is not all the use I make of the above-mentioned Weekly Paper. A Bill of Mortality is in it self an unanswerable Argument for a Providence: How can we, without supposing our selves under the constant Care of a Supreme Being, give any tolerable Account for that nice proportion which is kept in every great City, between the Deaths and Births of its Inhabitants, and between the number of Males and that of Females, who are brought into the World? What else cou'd adjust in so exact a manner the Recruits of every Nation to its Losses, or provide these new Supplies of People into such Cities as those of both Sexes? Chance could never hit the Balance with so steady a hand. Were we to look out by an intelligent Supervisor, we sometimes be over-charg'd with Multitudes, and others waste away into a Desart: We should often meet with a *populus virorum*, as *Florus* elegantly calls a *Generation of Males*, and at others a Race of Women. We may extend this Consideration to every Species of living Creatures, and consider the whole Animal World as an huge Army subsisting of innumerable Corps, if I may use that Phrase, whose Quota's have been kept entire near five Thousand Years, in so wonderful a manner, that there is hardly a single Species lost during this long Tract of Time. Could we have general Bills of Mortality for every kind of Animal, or particular ones for the Species in each Continent and Island, I question not but we should find in every Wood, Marsh or Mountain astonishing Instances of that Providence which watches over all its Works? The Reflection of a great Man in the *Romish* Church, upon reading those Words in the fifth Chapter of *Genesis*, *And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty Years, and he died*; *and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve Years, and he died*; *and all the days of Methusalah were nine hundred and sixty nine Years, and he died*; immediately shut himself up in a Convent, and retired from the World, as not thinking any thing in this Life worth pursuing, which had not regard to another.

The truth of it is, there is nothing in History which is so improving to the Reader as those Accounts which we meet with of the Deaths of eminent Persons, and of their Behaviour in that dreadful Season. I may also add, that there are no parts in History which affect and please the Reader in so sensible a manner. The Reason I take to be this, because there is no other single Circumstance in the Story of any Person which can possibly be the case of every one who reads it. A Battel or a Triumph are Conjunctures in which not one Man in a Million is likely to be engaged; but when we see a Person at the point of Death, we cannot forbear being attentive to every thing he says or does, because we are sure, that some time or other we shall our selves be in the same melancholy Circumstances. The General, the Statesman, or the Philosopher, are perhaps Characters which we may never act in; but the dying Man is one whom, sooner or later, we shall certainly resemble.

It is, perhaps, for the same kind of Reason that few Books, which have been written in *English*, have been so much perused as Doctor *Sherlock*'s Discourse upon Death; though at the same time I must own, that he, who has not perused this Excellent Piece, has not perhaps read one of the strongest Persuasives to a Religious Life that was ever written in any Language.

The Consideration, with which I shall close this Essay upon Death, is, one of the most ancient and most beaten Morals that has been recommended to Mankind. But its being so very common, and so universally received, though it takes away from it the Grace of Novelty, adds very much to the Weight of it, as it shews that it falls in with the general Sense of Mankind. In short, I would have every one consider, that he is in this Life nothing more than a Passenger, and that he is not to set up his Rest here, but to keep an attentive Eye upon that State of Being to which he approaches every Moment, and which will be for ever fixed and permanent. This single Consideration would be sufficient to extinguish the Bitterness of Hatred, the Thirst of Avarice, and the Cruelty of Ambition.

I am very much pleased with the Passage of *Antiphanes*, a very ancient Poet, who lived near an hundred Years before *Socrates*, which represents the Life of Man under this View, as I have here translated it Word for Word. *Be not grieved*, says he,

*above measure, for thy deceased Friends; for they are not dead, but have only finished that Journey which it is necessary for every one of us to take: We our selves must go to that great Place of Reception in which they are all of them assembled, and, in this general Rendezvous of Mankind, live together in another State of Being.*

I think I have, in a former Paper, taken notice of those beautiful Metaphors in Scripture, where Life is termed a Pilgrimage, and those who pass through it are called Strangers, and Sojourners upon Earth. I shall conclude this with a Story, which I have some where read in the Travels of Sir *John Chardin*; that Gentleman, after having told us, that the Inns which receive the Caravans in *Persia*, and the Eastern Countries, are called by the Name of *Caravansaries*, gives us a Relation to the following Purpose.

A *Dervise*, travelling through *Tartary*, being arrived at the Town of *Balk*, went into the King's Palace by a Mistake, as thinking it to be a publick Inn or Caravansary. Having looked about him for some time, he entered into a long Gallery, where he laid down his Wallet, and spread his Carpet, in order to repose himself upon it after the manner of the Eastern Nations. He had not been long in this Posture before he was discovered by some of the Guards, who asked him what was his Business in that place? The *Dervise* told them, he intended to take up his Night's Lodging in that Caravansary. The Guards let him know, in a very angry manner, that the House he was in, was not a Caravansary, but the King's Palace. It happened that the King himself passed through the Gallery during this Debate, and smiling at the Mistake of the *Dervise*, asked him how he could possibly be so dull as not to distinguish a Palace from a Caravansary? Sir, says the *Dervise*, give me leave to ask your Majesty a Question or two. Who were the Persons that lodged in this House when it was first Built? the King replied, *His Ancestors*. And who, says the *Dervise*, was the last Person that lodged here? The King replied, *His Father*. And who is it, says the *Dervise*, that lodges here at present? the King told him *that it was he himself*. And who, says the *Dervise*, will be here after you? The King answer'd, *The young Prince his Son*. 'Ah Sir, said 'the *Dervise*, a House that changes its Inhabitants 'so often, and receives such a perpetual Succession 'of Guests, is not a Palace but a *Caravansary*.

*The First and Second Volumes of the* SPECTATOR *in* 8*vo are now ready to be delivered to the Subscribers, by* J. Tonson *at* Shakespear's *Head over-against* Catherine-street *in the* Strand.

## *ADVERTISEMENTS.*

At the Desire of several Persons of Quality.
By Her Majesty's Company of Comedians,

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane this present Thursday, the 31st Day of January, will be presented a Comedy call'd, Love for Love. By her Majesty's Command no Persons are to be admitted behind the Scenes.

AT the Queen's Theatre in the Hay-Market, on Saturday next, being the 2d Day of February, will be perform'd an Opera called Antiochus. The Boxes 8 s. Pit 5 s. First Gallery 2 s. 6 d. Upper Gallery 2 s. 6 d. Boxes upon the Stage half a Guinea. To begin exactly at six. No Person to stand on the Stage.

Just Published,

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There is a curious Collection of Pictures [illegible] brought from beyond Sea, and are to be sold by Auction [illegible] the 1st of February, 1712. The Sale will begin at [illegible] the Clock in the Forenoon, at the Corner House in the [illegible] Covent Garden (it having been the Dwelling of the [illegible] Bois, whose Collection was sold in the same Apartments) [illegible] may be seen this Day from 9 in the Morning till 4 [illegible] noon, where Catalogues may be had Gratis. The Coin [illegible] as usual.

At Richmond in Surry, the House of the late [illegible] Haverstham is to be Let, Furnished or Unfurnished, or [illegible] be Sold, with or without Furniture; the Offices are very [illegible] there is a pleasant Garden well planted with Wall Fruit [illegible] house and Stables for six Horses. Enquire at Mr. Appleby's [illegible] ceny lane, or at Mr. Jollies at the Black Lyon in St. Paul's [illegible] or at the House at Richmond.

For SALE by the CANDLE.

This Day the 31st Instant, at Garraway's [illegible] fee-house in Exchange-Alley in Cornhil, at 3 in the After [illegible] one Hhd in a Lot) 181 Hhds of excellent new French Claret [illegible] Pontac, Margaux, Obrion, and la Tour, and other [illegible] Growths of France, deep, bright, strong, fresh, of the right [illegible] and of the very last Vintage, neat, entire parcels, and not [illegible] sold out of these Vaults or exposed for Sale, Imported by [illegible] Ship the Dragon, Hans Anderson Master, directly from [illegible] now in Vaults under the House of Mr. Aaron Parsons [illegible] Gates to Messieurs Tourton and Guigner, Merchants, [illegible] in Fenchurch-street. To be seen and tasted this Day [illegible] Sale. Note, the Buyers are to pay down at the Place of [illegible] neat per Lott in part, and 6 d. to the Broker, or the Lot [illegible] up again; and they are desired to appear punctually at [illegible] pointed, because the Lotts are many, the Sale being [illegible] ed without adjourning. To be sold by Tho. Twining [illegible] Seething-Lane in Tower-street.

At the Mountain Wine-Cellar under the [illegible] South-Sea Coffee house in Broad-street, is sold by [illegible] Mountain Malaga Wine at 6 s. 8 d. per Gallon or 18 s. [illegible] bing a fresh parcel lately landed, and of the best [illegible] Viana Wine at 13 d. per Bottle; such Persons as [illegible] shall pay but 12 s. there being 13 Bottles, warranted [illegible] from the Grape.

*LONDON*: Printed for *Sam. Buckley*, at the *Dolphin* in *Little-Britain*. Sold by *A. Baldwin* in *Warwick-Lane*; where Advertisements are [illegible] as also by *Charles Lillie*, Perfumer, at the Corner of *Beauford-Buildings* the *Strand*.